

1903 75

House of Commons Debates

THIRD SESSION—NINTE PARLIAMENT

6

SPEECH

OF

HON. DAVID TISDALE, M.P.

ON

SUPPLY -- MILITIA

OTTAWA, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1903

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Last year, when discussing militia matters, I used the following words, which I shall quote as expressing my feelings at present:

I shall make my remarks on this subject entirely free from politics, and entirely free from any fault finding, even if there be room for finding fault. It is my opinion, as I have often said before, that the militia should be kept entirely out of politics. It is above and beyond all politics. Of course, it must to some extent have a political bearing because the minister who controls our militia for the time being must belong to one or other of the political parties, but so far as I am concerned I will exclude politics as much as possible from the consideration of this question. If I have any fault to find with the Minister of Militia, or with the manner in which the contingents were despatched to South Africa, I propose to do as the Liberals do in the old country: viz., keep my criticism until the war is over and then bring the minister to account. I intend to show to the people of the world that whatever our political disagreements may be in Canada, we are ready and willing to show a united front in defence of our country and of the empire, and to leave complaint and criticism until we have conquered the enemy.

I do not propose to bring any politics into the discussion to-day. At the same time, if I find it necessary or desirable to indulge in any criticism, I shall not be debarred from doing so through the fear that anybody would think I was moved by political reasons. I would just say one word about politics and then drop that subject altogether during this discussion. I want to warn my hon. friend the Minister of Militia that he will have to be very careful, very strong-minded and firm in order to keep politics out of this question. He will have to stiffen his backbone and make his will stronger if he is going to do that effectively, because I think, in spite of the glowing picture he has

given us of the state of the militia to-day, there are some difficulties which require to be remedied. I do not propose just now to take up the propositions of the hon. gentleman, because that can be better done at a later stage in the few remarks which I propose to make in connection with this most important matter. We have had three very important events within the year, with which our military organization has some connection. We have had the South African difficulty ended, and we have had a Colonial Conference and a new Major General to take command of our forces. The South African peace having been accomplished, now is the time, as I said in my remarks last year, for criticism. Fortunately that war is over and we contemplate with pride and sorrow the lonely graves which mark the valour and endurance of our young men who gave up their lives for the maintenance of the empire and the credit of Canada. Our heroes who survive have returned and taken off their war paraphernalia, and you would scarcely know them now from the other individuals gathered throughout our country, but in common with their dead comrades, they will ever live in the hearts and memories of Canadians for the valour they displayed and the evidence they gave the world that Britain no longer stands alone, but is surrounded by her children, ever prepared, when the call is sufficiently urgent, to unite and uphold British unity and the glorious principles that underlie the British constitution. Before proceeding to discuss the Colonial Conference, I wish to make some reference to the militia report. I think we may congratulate ourselves upon our good fortune in getting so distinguished and gallant a soldier as our present Major General to take

command of the militia. He has been with us now sufficiently long to enable us to appreciate his work. Before coming here he had some experience of the militia of Canada, because he is one of the ablest soldiers which the great empire found it necessary to send to South Africa. I propose to read some extracts from his report, so as to show where we stand in connection with those very important matters to which my hon. friend the Minister of Militia has alluded. In his report he says:

I have proposed that in future the regimental establishments of the active militia shall be at war strength, each unit containing in addition within itself the germ of a reserve. These proposals have met with your general approval, and I am now drawing up the establishments which, when complete, I will submit to you.

I may say that in his report he gives no explanation about the result, but my hon. friend has given us some insight into that. The Major General proceeds to say:

These camps of instruction covered a total period of twenty-five days, the whole of which I devoted to the personal supervision of the training, visiting each camp in turn.

As men who have only nine working days in the year to learn their duties as soldiers and non-commissioned officers cannot afford to spend any of that time on ceremonial, I arranged that instruction should be entirely devoted to practical work.

The officers and men under instruction worked with great zeal and intelligence, and though the system was in many cases quite new to them, they picked it up very quickly, and the tactical exercises engaged in towards the end of the training were useful in showing to all ranks how much they had still to learn before they could be considered efficient soldiers, let alone non-commissioned officers qualified to instruct and lead others.

Observation at these camps has shown me that the Canadian soldier takes the greatest interest in anything which his intelligence proves to him is of real practical benefit. Therefore, I propose in future to leave out marches past and ceremonial, and instead to convert the camps practically into schools of instruction for fitting the soldier to take the field, with not one item in the programme that does not make for fighting efficiency.

Though the rural militia contains a large proportion of earnest, self-sacrificing officers and men, it does not satisfy the requirements of a national defence force. Nominally it is a body of men who engage to serve for a period of three years. As a matter of fact it consists and always has consisted of a number of regiments which are almost recruited afresh every time they are called out for training. Large numbers of entirely raw men enlist before the particular training and are perhaps never seen afterwards, no real effort being made to compel them to fulfil their engagement, owing to powers of compulsion being quite inadequate for the purpose. Consequently it is impossible to carry instruction beyond the most elementary stages. Such a system is unduly expensive and ineffective from a military point of view. So small is the rate of pay, and so unsatisfactory have been the conditions of training, that the best men do not enter the militia as they might. From this it follows that the non-commissioned officers also are to a large extent insufficiently qualified for their posts, nor can they command ready

obedience from the soldier when, as in many cases, they are quite ignorant of the very rudiments of their duties. Numbers of men go out to camp as non-commissioned officers without any previous training whatever, and the proportion of these men who are new to the rank on such occasions shows clearly that there is a want of continuity in the personnel of the units.

As with some of the non-commissioned officers, so it is with some of the officers. Many have evidently not studied their profession sufficiently to act as the leaders and instructors of their non-commissioned officers and men. I make suggestions, later, on this matter.

Self-instruction by means of books, lectures to their men in well-appointed comfortable armouries (when these are provided) during the winter, and thoroughly practical work in the summer months will, joined with the excellent spirit which pervades the officer class of the Canadian militia, soon, I anticipate, produce the required result.

Material.

There is a great deficiency of all kinds of military stores and material essential for active service. This deficiency should be made good in time of peace.

It is absolutely necessary that the regulation allowance of every article of equipment required for mobilization of companies should be at company headquarters, for regimental mobilization at regimental headquarters.

Though there appears to be almost a sufficient stock of camp equipment for the existing units at their present strength, there is certainly no reserve available for the large force which would have to be placed in the field in time of war.

City Corps.

The city regiments, under the present organization would as a whole be the easiest to mobilize, but even they cannot in any sense be said to approach a state of readiness to take the field. They labour under the greatest difficulties and disadvantages. They all suffer from want of field training, owing to the fact that they get practically no camp experience. The allowances for instruction are too small; so, in the most efficient of the corps much of the necessary expense has to be undertaken by the officers and men instead of by the public. This unfair expense causes the loss of many good officers to the country. Many corps suffer from want of proper accommodation in the way of armouries, &c. Deficiencies of this kind have either to be made up by private effort or the corps must suffer.

Army Service Corps.

This branch of the service has been started this year. Of the four skeleton companies authorized, two are now complete and another is in process of organization. Lieutenant Colonel Biggar and two non-commissioned officers were sent to Aldershot where they were given every advantage by the authorities to gain information on army service corps work.

Since his return to Canada, Lieutenant Colonel Biggar has conducted a six weeks' course of instruction at Montreal with the company there, with satisfactory results.

He goes on to speak very highly of the school of musketry, and I think I will read part of that, because I consider that one of the most important improvements that have been made:

School of Musketry.

Courses of instruction were held during the months of July and August at the Rockcliffe Rifle

Range. The number of officers and non-commissioned officers taking the course totalled sixty, this being double the number that attended the same term of the previous year. Of these 31 officers and 22 non-commissioned officers obtained certificates.

Under the able and energetic command of Lieutenant Colonel Cartwright, the inspector of musketry and commandant of the School of Musketry, great progress has been made in the past year in extending and popularizing the knowledge of rifle shooting throughout Canada. The history of the new rifle clubs shows a steady growth, and the value of the work done by the School of Musketry, not in the teaching of shooting, but in the teaching of instructors in shooting can hardly be overestimated, even though its work is as yet on a small scale.

I read these things, not merely for the information of the House, but to get them on 'Hansard,' where they can be seen by the country. Because we get too little out of this report. A number of military gentlemen get it, but the country generally seem to get very little knowledge of it. He speaks of the cavalry thus:

I have issued a memorandum on the training of the mounted troops of Canada, and also a new syllabus of instruction. I have assimilated the equipment and training of all branches of mounted troops.

I am preparing instructions for the militia on their training, dealing in particular with musketry, field engineering and field work generally.

Referring to the cadet corps, he says:

This branch of the national defence system might easily be of the greatest value to the country, but from various causes it is at present of little account.

The results of the present system compare very unfavourably with what has been achieved in Australasia.

The whole cadet corps question requires to be considered and reorganized on workable lines, as the youth of the country are splendid material now lying waste from the military point of view.

Arrangements should be made to furnish every cadet corps of a certain strength with proper instruction.

These extracts give us knowledge not only of the condition of our militia, but of the capacity, industry and enthusiasm of the Major General Commanding. There is not a detail so small as to escape him, and there is no matter so difficult that he will not undertake its improvement. I say again we have to congratulate ourselves that we have in command a man whose record and reputation we have every reason to be proud of, and not only that, but a man of straightforward common sense, a man of capacity and indefatigable industry. It will be the fault of the department and of the people of Canada if he does not make a success of the militia, and I prophesy that with the proper assistance he will do so to a very large extent. Now let me read an extract or two in connection with the Colonial Conference, which shows to what extent the government committed this country on the question of defence. Here is an extract from

the report of the Canadian government to the Colonial Conference:

But while thus calling attention to the progress that has already been made by Canada in her militia organization, the ministers are far from claiming that perfection has been attained. If defects exist, there is every desire on the part of the Canadian government to remove them, and for this purpose the advice and assistance of experienced imperial officers will be welcomed and all reasonable efforts made to secure an efficient system.

In conclusion, the ministers repeat that, while the Canadian government are obliged to dissent from the measures proposed, they fully appreciate the obligation of the Dominion to make expenditures for the purposes of defence in proportion to the increasing population and wealth of the country. They are willing that these expenditures shall be so divested as to relieve the taxpayer of the mother country from some of the burdens which he now bears; and they have the strongest desire to carry out their defence schemes in co-operation with the imperial authorities and under the advice of experienced imperial officers so far as this is consistent with the principle of local self-government which has proved so great a factor in the promotion of imperial unity.

At that time also we had some important information showing the expenditure per capita of the different colonies, including Canada, in connection with defence, showing that Canada had the lowest rate of expenditure, per capita, and only about one-fourteenth that of the mother country.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. What did they give as the per capita expenditure of Canada?

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Two shillings. That would be about the average up to this year, according to the figures given by the hon. Minister of Militia and Defence.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Pretty nearly.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. I will not trouble the House with these figures. My object was simply to show the position that our government took with regard to this matter. I think that in these militia matters we should support any proposals emanating from the government unless we find in them something very wrong. If I find the government proceeding upon wrong principles, I am prepared to call attention to their errors. But the government represent the whole country for the time being, and they have committed the country, directly or indirectly, to the empire in regard to this matter. Therefore, I think both sides should support the government, except where the government is clearly and widely wrong; and those who may not be quite satisfied can wait until they get into power to improve upon the government's proposals. I quite agree with the hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Thompson) when he said:

Taking all these quotations together we find an absolute pledge given by our representatives for militia betterment, a pledge given

on an occasion of grave importance, reduced to writing, mistake or misunderstanding an impossibility.

That brings us to the main question, the state of the militia at the present time and the proposals made by the hon. Minister of Militia and Defence for its betterment. I must say that his presentation of his request for increased expenditure and of his very broad and ambitious scheme for the improvement of the militia of Canada is of very great interest and requires a great deal of consideration. For my own part, I am prepared to join with parliament in approving of an expenditure even beyond what I might myself consider necessary if those in charge of the militia of this country considered it necessary for the advancement of our national defence. While this scheme is of such magnitude that it will startle some people, there is no question that if it is practicable and is properly and carefully carried out it will lay the foundation of a magnificent scheme of defence. On general lines I approve of the policy proposed, but, when I do so, it must be understood that we are not relying solely upon expenditure, and that this expenditure will be supplemented by successful work in other lines. If we are to have an effective system we must be prepared to face the expense, but my hon. friend the Minister of Militia and Defence must not forget that, if we are to entrust him with this very large sum of money, the expenditure of that money must be supplemented by efficient instructions, work and results, so that we may have a proper and efficient actual fighting force, supplemented with the same sort of reserve. Owing to the South African war and to other troubles which my hon. friend mentioned, he must remember that the expenditure on a peace footing has been very much less than the larger sum he now asks, as all of the present estimates for the militia are on a strictly peace footing, and I admired the courage and straightforwardness of the hon. minister when he said that we will have to stand this increased expenditure for three or four years.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Probably five years.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. My own opinion is that if we embark on this scheme and it can be made a success, it is probable that the annual grant required will never become less. I am not afraid of such an expenditure, especially if the country continues to make progress at its present rate. I believe that if such an expenditure as this is worth while, we should undertake it at once and with our eyes open. With the great development of our industries, production and population, with the prominence that is given to great imperial and colonial matters in the old country, I am most optimistic with regard to the future of this country for no country under

heaven to-day offers the inducements to the immigrant that Canada does. We have seen a great colonial minister resign from the highest place that the ambition of man can contemplate in order to fight the battle of closer union between the various portions of the British empire. That battle is of the utmost importance to Canada for when it is won we will have an illimitable market, a market for more than we can produce for scores of years to come, and we will have flowing to our shores all the immigration we desire, and the best immigrants in the world. I do not agree with my hon. friend from North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) who the other day said that we will in a few years to come ship wheat from Port Arthur into the United States because the population of that country will increase in that time by 20,000,000. If this closer union between the empire and the colonies takes place we will be more likely to see immigrants coming in large numbers from the United States into Canada than to see immigration flowing into the United States from any other country in the world. We should do our share in promoting closer relation with the motherland. We should not halt at the tariff preference which has been granted by the Canadian government to the British people, but back up the efforts of the great Imperial statesman I have mentioned in his efforts for mutual preferential trade relations between the empire and the colonies. Back him up not only by sympathetic words but by acts as well. While this government declined to take up the question of defence on the lines submitted by the Imperial authorities, they pledged themselves that they would see to it that our militia would be improved and we should not be deterred by the fear of expense from fulfilling that pledge. Therefore if the Minister of Militia and Defence goes on with this scheme on the lines suggested, carefully and with a view to the best interests of the militia, I should say that the scheme was a good one. If we are to have a militia force it must to some extent be commensurate with what would be required by the experiences of war. While the enlistment should be smaller than what would be necessary in case of war it is very wise to have all of these auxiliary services, munitions of war, clothing, medical supplies, and camp equipment, in an efficient condition. Not only must we have a full supply of materials but these must be supplemented by proper instruction of those who will have charge of and those who will use them in case of need. All of this will cost a great deal of money. Owing I presume to the large appropriations for which he has had to ask for other purposes, the hon. gentleman has not asked an appropriation for the additional arsenal which he promised us last year or the year before. The hon. gentleman is committed to it but we can wait for it a short time as it is one of the most

important requirements of our system of defence.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I think I should state, and I forgot to state this, that there is a company now which has approached the government with the view of establishing an arsenal at the city of Ottawa if they can make a contract for the supply of a considerable amount of ammunition.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. I would not commit myself to the city of Ottawa, but I am glad to hear that it is to be in Ontario. The place it should be located would be a matter, I presume, that the hon. minister and the Major General would be largely responsible for, but it is a matter that requires very careful consideration and therefore I am not prepared to commit myself to any opinion upon it on short notice. I will say, however, that it should be somewhere well west in Ontario. I am very glad to hear that the hon. gentleman is making some progress in that regard. I do not propose to discuss the details of these different matters now because we will be able when we come to consider them in detail to procure any information which the hon. minister has not supplied in his remarks. The most serious matter of all to be considered is the establishment of these auxiliaries. The hon. gentleman and the government must be seized fully of the responsibility if they are undertaking in asking for very large sums. That parliament will grant them I have no doubt. The proposal of the government commits us to these expenditures for years. It is a new departure and is a scheme which at every step should be most carefully considered because those who follow it will be committed to it, and there are any mistakes in regard to it the country will be committed to them. This is a comparatively easy thing compared with what is coming to presently; that is the purchase of the material for the militia, and the question of how it is to be evolved. The main point is to be maintained. You have these auxiliary services which are necessary. Nearly all of them will be composed of paid men, because those who are in charge of them must be capable of performing the duties of their positions. The problem of the militia is not what are called our citizen soldiers. I agree that you cannot make the militia force what it should be and what it is in most countries, but it is efficient without establishing these auxiliary services. We have to pay out the money if we are going to have them. But that is not the difficulty and that is not the hon. gentleman's difficulty now. I call attention to that because I am not satisfied with some features of the hon. gentleman's proposal for reasons which I will give the hon. gentleman presently. I am not saying that I am at all

prepared to oppose this vote or to oppose this proposal. It is my hon. friend who takes the responsibility, but I want him to be seized of the difficulty of the problem which is to raise and keep up even the skeleton. If you call 40,000 men a skeleton, and to get the reserve and keep it. Without this we will simply be wasting the money. We had better accept the doctrine of the timid member for Labelle (Mr. Bourassa) that we should only provide a police force and put ourselves at the mercy of any country that wishes to step in. I cannot accept that doctrine. I have been brought up in a different school. I believe that what is worth having is worth fighting for. You do not look to see what your chances are if you are a man. You will stand up any way and if you are going to lose your life you will do it in defence of what is worth fighting for. I congratulate the hon. minister on his courage at all events because it requires courage to come down and ask for this large expenditure. It requires still greater courage to admit that this is not for this year only. He has presented it in a way that is proper in such matters as this. I want to call his attention to the fact that this is laying down a wide foundation financially. The people will hold him and his colleagues accountable for it or they will give them credit for it, but the easiest part of the problem is to get the money and to spend it. The difficult problem I am coming to, and it is more than the question of the pay of the militia. Last year the hon. minister promised us a reserve sufficient to make a total of 100,000 men. I will come to that presently. He gave us to-day what I think was a rather optimistic statement of the result of this year's camp and of the state of the militia. The ranks of city regiments have always been and are filled. They have advantages in a way. At the same time you see what the Major General said; a good deal has to be learned to prepare them for the field. The difficulty with them is the counterpart of what it is with the rural corps. They can drill and assemble together in their drill halls as often as they please, but unless they go away and do some general work they would have a hard time of it if they were turned out suddenly. That can be mended without any great difficulty, but something or other is the matter with the rural militia or else figures and numbers do not speak correctly. My attention was called to this, though I had thought of it before, more strikingly by the remarks of the hon. member for Haldimand and Monck (Mr. Thompson). Let me say to him that it is very gratifying to find a young member of parliament, with our strong party affiliations, standing up in the way he did and expressing his views as a soldier and as a member of parliament at the same time. He stated what probably some persons might think very unpleasant truths in regard to the militia. I commend him for it and I paid

more attention to what he said on that question under the circumstances than I might otherwise have done. He talks of the state of the camp. I have taken the trouble to prepare some general figures and whatever explanation the hon. Minister of Militia may have made in defence of the Niagara or any other camp I do not think the figures bear him out. The hon. member for Haldimand and Monck said:

Am I not justified still further in the assumption that once let the cabinet be convinced that the militia is not even stationary but actually retrogressing this cabinet pledged to Britain for improvement, and it must and will gladly meet the situation and destroy the danger?

Well Sir, in all seriousness, after due consideration and recognizing the importance of the assertion, I say here to-day in my place in parliament that the militia, so far as the rural part thereof is concerned, is infinitely worse to-day than it was two years ago, and that in my opinion another year under present conditions will utterly demoralize it.

The reason is not far to seek—it lies in fifty cent daily wage.

I do not entirely agree with my hon. friend (Mr. Thompson) that the entire cause is attributable to the pay, but I do agree with him that the pay is too small. I approve of the suggestion of the minister that the pay should be graded by the number of years of service; but in view of the condition the force is in at present, I think it would be wise to increase it at once to 75 cents a day for the first year, and then to scale it up according to the years of service. Like Colonel Thompson, I know the rural militia well. It is true that for some years they have not been turning out as they used to. These men do not want pay in the sense of being hired; but, all the same, they do not like to be out of pocket. The first-class men, and that is the kind we want, will not put up with the camp fare, and as they supplement their rations out of their own pockets, they very often find that they are at a loss. It may be said that they should put up with the camp fare, but you will find that men who have the spirit that the minister refers to will not do so. Even members of parliament have looked for an increased indemnity, and so it is through all walks of life; things have changed since the 50 cents a day rate was established. I have the figures here for 1896 and 1897, the last year before the minister came into power and his first year in office, and the difference is very startling.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The camp in 1896 was under my direction.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. The report is signed by the Hon. Mr. Dickey.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I do not know how that can be. The camp in 1896 was not held until September.

Hon. Mr. TISI. However, that does not matter much, because the previous years to 1896 would make a still worse showing for the minister. The details of the establishment ordered out in 1896 are that the officers and men called out numbered 12,710, and there turned out 11,910, or 800 short. In 1897 there were 10,719 ordered out and 9,970 responded, or a deficit of 749. The rural and the urban battalions were not distinguished in the statement presented by the minister to-day.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The criticism of my hon. friend from Haldimand was directed to the rural battalions, and not to the city battalions.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Quite so. In 1902 the minister ordered out 22,897 and only 7,937 came out, and 14,960 failed to respond.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. That is a mistake. The number ordered out in 1902 was much smaller than the number ordered out this year. There were only 15 per company, instead of 21. Only one officer per company was ordered out in 1902, and this year all the officers were ordered out.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. I am taking these figures from the blue-book, which is headed 'Returns showing the number of officers, non-commissioned officers, men and horses trained during the year 1902 in district camps.' The total of officers called out was 1,905; the non-commissioned officers and men, 20,502; and the total number that received twelve days' training was: Officers, 881; non-commissioned officers and men, 6,932. Then there is a summary at the end.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. What does the summary say?

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. It gives the same figures for the district camps, and it shows the turn out at local headquarters, which was a splendid one.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. There must be something wrong in the heading of that statement. The fact is, no matter what the table shows, that in 1902 only 15 men out of 40 men per company were ordered out, and only one officer per company. Whoever made up that statement has made a mistake. I am very sorry that mistake has occurred; but, as a matter of fact, less than half were called out in 1902 as compared with this year.

Mr. THOMPSON (Haldimand). If my hon. friend will permit me, I may say that in the camp at Niagara, which I think was the same as any other camp in that year, only one officer and all non-commissioned officers per company with the regimental staff, with twenty-one privates per regiment, the last named for fatigue duties only and not for drill, were called out, so the number could not possibly be as stated in the report.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. All I can say is that that is the statement, and it should be corrected if it is not correct.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. It is wrong, there is no doubt about that.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Take the figures of this year; 5,904 officers and men were ordered out and 1,009 turned out; that is about three-fourths.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. That is the usual percentage.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Add to that, from the same table, the whole of the city regiments, numbering 11,754, and you have only 23,763 men out of our total force of 40,000. When you could not fill up the small call you made this year, it was because there were no more men that you could muster.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. But my hon. friend will see that we only called out 15,000 and 12,000 responded.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. It is my hon. friend who does not see. The fact that you called out only 15,904 shows that you had no more left or you would have filled up the ranks. If you are 25 per cent short of your number, are you going to count all those who are absent as if they were there? Suppose you want for active service a certain number of men, and you tell the commanding officers of the different regiments to bring out so many men; they make a call for as many men as they can get until they secure the required number.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Take the case of one company of 40 men. Of these 21 are called out. The captain of that company selects these 21 men. My hon. friend assumes that because all these did not turn out, none of the residue, if they had been asked, would have gone. That is the exception which I take to his argument.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. I have been a captain and a colonel, and we do not do any such thing. In that statement Colonel Thompson will bear me out. We say we want so many men, and the word goes out. The necessary number do not turn out. Would we march away without seeing if we could get any others? Not at all.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Unfortunately, as a rule, the officers of the rural battalions, of one of which I have been a member for a quarter of a century, do not get their men until the morning they are starting for camp; and it might be that they would not have an opportunity at the last moment of replacing those who failed to turn out.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. There is no use of our discussing this matter. I say that when

you want 21 men out of 45, and you go away with 5 men short, it is conclusive proof that the officers either do not know what they are about or have no other men.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. It is conclusive proof that five men who promised to go do not go; that is all.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. The trouble with us is always to get enough men. If there were trouble something different might occur, because you could recruit new men. I know that when the old battalion in Norfolk went to camp, the boys did not start without getting every possible man to make up the required number. The captains were humming around for ten days; and, as Colonel Thompson complained, and I sympathize with him, ten days is too short a time.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I agree with that.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Another thing, which may be due to the shortage the hon. gentleman speaks of, is that very often the battalions go into camp with half the number made up of recruits. It was not so formerly. I remember that for years Colonel Davis, the hon. gentleman's predecessor in command of the 38th and 39th battalions, used to march to camp with 300 or 400 men, according to whether he had six or eight companies. I say you have only 12,000 men whom you can turn out in the rural districts or an ordinary call for a camp; and your reserve, which was to be 60,000, amounts to only 10,000. Colonel Thompson's figures—and I agree with them—show that the rifle associations would not amount to over 10,000, apart from those belonging to the force. I speak of them from knowledge of several clubs in my own riding. The hon. gentleman spoke moderately and temperately, as he always does, because he did not want to be unduly severe in his criticism.

I say that this is an unsatisfactory and alarming condition, and the minister ought to look into the organization of these rural battalions. I hear things which he may not, but he is responsible and should take timely warning. I tell you, Sir, that the politicians are busy to-day in our militia. When I was in the active militia, the colonels in command—and I have no doubt the hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Thompson) follows the same course—were always careful to make each corps as non-partisan as possible and to give promotion to every man who deserved it without considering his politics. I was not a member of parliament then, and we did not care anything about members of parliament. If an officer went courting favours from a member of parliament, he was not allowed to stay very long in the force. There are evidently difficulties of some sort which embarrass our

militia system, there is a lack of inducement to our young men to join the militia, as has been shown by the hon. member for Haldimand (Mr. Thompson) in the very temperate and measured speech which he made on this subject some time ago, and which could only have been prompted by his sense of duty and his responsibility as commander of a regiment. Whether the trouble lies in the district headquarters or whether it is the politicians who are at the bottom of it, there is an alarming state of affairs, as the hon. member for Haldimand pointed out; and if the Militia Department cannot discover the cause at headquarters, the hon. minister cannot say that he has not been warned by commanding officers and also by one who, although his time of service has passed, still takes a keen interest in the service and is always anxious to promote its efficiency.

In the speech which he made last year the hon. Minister of Militia thus referred to the report of the Major General, for that year, to which I had previously called attention:

Now, I will endeavour, very briefly to refer to some of the matters which the hon. member for South Norfolk has brought before us. In the first place, he has referred to the annual report of the Militia Department, and more particularly to the report of the Major General.

I am sure those who will take the trouble to read that report will agree with him, as I do, that he has not spoken in too high terms of praise of it. While, perhaps, in some of its details, or, possibly, in some of the conclusions of the Major General, I cannot literally concur, I say that in the main I approve of all that he has said.

I think it is a convenient thing that the Major General, the head of the militia for the time being, should always have a free hand in placing before the people of the country his own views as a professional soldier upon the question of defence, and therefore, during my term of office, and I think it has been the custom in the past, the Major General of the day has had a free hand to express his real and genuine views in reference to the condition of the militia of the country and in reference to what he thinks ought to be done to improve the condition of the militia.

But what I object to, and have protested against is the refusal of the hon. minister to submit to the House the special report by the general officer commanding to the minister himself. Last year the hon. minister committed himself upon the principle of giving the Major General a 'free hand to express his real and genuine views in reference to the condition of the militia and in reference to what he thinks ought to be done to improve the condition of the militia' as I have quoted above, and this year I find in the report of the Major General the following paragraph:

With this report I have the honour also to forward another special report to which I have given a great deal of thought, and which contains a broad scheme for the improvement of the militia. If the proposals contained in

it are carried out, they will in my opinion conduce to the greater efficiency of the militia.

I have twice before this session requested and insisted upon the minister giving the special report of Lord Dundonald, our new and distinguished Major General to the public.

Let me add that the last time I brought this matter up in the House my hon. friend the Minister of Militia offered to show that special report to me or to any member of the House, but I declined to look at it. The ground I took was that it was not a confidential report, that was not declared to be confidential, and the Minister of Militia has no right at his own sweet will to keep back from the members of this House or the people of this country or those associated with the force whatever propositions the Major General may have submitted. I felt indignant at the refusal to make this report public, and declined to look at what should by right be as public to the humblest individual as to any member of parliament. Here is what one of our great independent dailies, the Toronto 'News,' has to say:

Militia reform is fairly active at present in Canada. Yet it seems to move in spasmodic fashion on uncertain lines, and to suffer from lack of prevision and careful planning. For some time the main activity has been in the organization of the highly necessary auxiliary services. Good work has been done. The army service corps scored a brilliant success at Niagara. The bearer companies and field hospitals are excellent troops. The intelligence department has made a good start, and the ordnance corps should prove successful. Much, of course, remains to be done. The engineer arm is almost altogether neglected, although every day of the South African war showed how indispensable it is. The general officer commanding has no engineer advice at headquarters, and there are no engineers in the permanent force, although an engineer establishment would be of the utmost value to the country for industrial as well as for militia purposes.

The provision of auxiliary services falls far short of achieving the organization which the Canadian militia needs.

I commend the hon. minister for having removed some of these deficiencies by the plan he has submitted:

The unreadiness of the fighting services is appalling. For instance, it has been repeatedly pointed out that the proportions of the cavalry, artillery and infantry are absolutely wrong. One lesson of the South African war was the need for heavy guns and pom-poms. Have effective steps been taken to give our artillery these weapons? The machine gun is indispensable in the field. When Canada sent an infantry battalion to South Africa, she provided it with two maxims. The second contingent had an automatic gun for each squadron. Yet we have not provided our militia infantry with one machine gun to each battalion. Worse than that—were our battalions to be called out at war strength. It is doubtful whether we could give our men a rifle apiece. We should have an ample supply of ammunition in the country. It is doubtful whether we have more than is needed for target practice.

Many of those defects will be removed by this comprehensive scheme which my hon. friend has brought forward, but in this scheme the hon. minister points to something more which the Major General is considering, and what I protest against is that we are called on to vote three and three-quarter million dollars without being informed what the views of the Major General are. The 'News' proceeds to say:

The list of defects in our force could be prolonged at will. Definiteness and coherence of plan constitute the grand need. We do not wish our militia to find themselves ill-armed—or unarmed—and in hopeless confusion when mobilized. We should go about the work as methodically as we would about the building of a new railway.

It is precisely in this respect that Canada has shown a singular lack of business method. We have an excellent expert. Lord Dundonald is by far the best general officer commanding Canada ever has had. His particular characteristic is the absence on his part of any desire to professionalize the militia. He has not the slightest wish to set up a little army of imitation regulars. He wishes to establish a system for turning out real citizen soldiers when the need comes. The great feature of all his suggestions which have been made public is their common sense and the way in which they fit into one another—that is, their coherence.

This expert has prepared a carefully thought-out scheme of organization. We may take it for granted that it is a coherent plan, each part depending on and fitting into the other parts. His propositions have been coolly suppressed. The people of Canada have employed Lord Dundonald and they are not allowed to learn what he recommends. The only excuse put forward is that his report is 'confidential.' That is nonsense. Strategic plans may be kept secret, organization cannot. Lord Dundonald's report, according to the portion which was published, deals with organization, not with strategic plans. It should be placed before the people.

Until we know what our expert has proposed, we are working and spending money in the dark. Piecemeal additions, the raising of new corps here and there, are not sufficient. Coherence of purpose and plan is needed. There is a short way to getting that. Let us know what Lord Dundonald recommended.

Then:

The 'Canadian Military Gazette,' after remarking that the Canadian soldier needs training, and is anxious to secure it, 'The Gazette' quotes Lord Dundonald's statement that the 'Canadian soldier takes the greatest interest in anything which his intelligence proves to him is of real practical benefit.' It goes on to say: 'This makes it all the more important that the special report of the General Officer Commanding should not be kept in the pigeon holes of the department at Ottawa. The intelligent Canadian soldier wants to digest it.' 'The Gazette' speaks in high terms of Lord Dundonald, and observes: 'If the special reports of experts like Lord Dundonald are to be suppressed, what is the use of placing an expert in the position of General Officer Commanding. We are simply wasting our money and making ourselves the laughing stock of intelligent people.'

This places the matter in a nutshell. We employ an excellent officer, we get him to draw

up a scheme of organization, which, if tried, could not possibly be kept secret, and then we suppress it. For a democratic people we are getting fairly far on the road to autocracy.

Now, I commend these expressions to the minister. I hope he will publish this report. Let us see it; let the people understand it. The hon. gentleman is lessening his own usefulness as head of the force, as well as hurting the feelings of officers and men of the militia, by not letting them know what this report contains. Nor is it just to the general. It is not respectful to the intelligent people of this country that such a state of things should exist. If the report were confidential in anyway or could be considered so, the general would certainly have so stated.

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. My hon. friend (Hon. Mr. Tisdale) says that the report to which he refers says it was not confidential. It may not have been marked 'confidential' but I think I am the best judge whether it was confidential or not. The report was a scheme of defence, and was not, in my judgment, such a report as should be published to the world. When I referred to a former report it was to that of General O'Grady Haly, but the very nature of my observations shows that I referred to the ordinary report of the year reviewing the work of the militia of the year. We have done the same thing with Lord Dundonald in this case. He had a free hand. He said what he wanted to say. Not a word has been changed, not a 't' crossed or an 'l' dotted in change of his report. But, besides this, he made a special report, involving a very large expenditure. That report came into my hand twenty-four hours before the whole report had to go to the printer. I had not read it or submitted it to my colleagues, and it would have been out of the question that such a report as that should have been sent to the printer to be published to the world before the minister should have an opportunity of considering it. I have kept that report in my own hands. I have used it and am using it. It was an official report for the advantage of the government of the country. There are parts of it that will be published; I shall have a great pleasure in publishing them. But so far as that report involves a heavy expenditure which the government had not decided to make I felt it would be highly improper to publish it, that it is a thing that would not be done in England or anywhere else.

Mr. INGRAM. What did the hon. gentleman (Hon. Sir Frederick Borden) say was the nature of this report?

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I said it was practically a scheme of defence. We had a committee sitting here in 1898, for which we paid a very considerable sum of money, which made a

report which has never seen the light of day. It was printed by the Defence Committee under the imperial government. It is something secret. Lord Dundonald's report was of a similar character, and one that at any rate for the time being should be treated as confidential.

Mr. INGRAM. Lord Dundonald said it was a broad scheme for the improvement of the militia. If it is this as well as the other, why not publish the part of it that can be published?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I have said that that would be done, and I have given part of it to-day.

Mr. INGRAM. The hon. gentleman used it in his own speech. But that is not very satisfactory to hon. gentlemen on this side who have had no opportunity to read this report. How can we discuss it when we have had no opportunity to read it?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. No one on this side has had it.

Mr. INGRAM. Except the hon. minister himself.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Who ever heard of a minister not having the advantage, and, if he saw fit, the exclusive advantage at the outset, of the advice of his principal technical officer? Who ever heard of the government not having that advantage? And who ever heard of such an officer's report being published to the world before the government had had an opportunity of deciding whether they would adopt the suggestion set forth in it or not?

Mr. INGRAM. I was pointing out the effect of this course. The Major General, who is the chief officer of the Militia Department, makes a certain report to the department. That report is treated as a strictly private matter. The minister may differ very materially from the Major General with respect to the contents of that report. But I think parliament should be in a position to say which, in our judgment, is right.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Ingram) thinks it is in accordance with the principles and practice of responsible government that an official of the Militia Department should have the right to put forward his views to the people before the minister has made up his mind whether he will adopt those views or not?

Mr. INGRAM. I will go so far as to say that there is no use having an expert military man come to this country for the purpose of suggesting what would be in the interests of the militia if his recommendations are not carried out.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I take the responsibility.

Mr. THOMPSON (Haldimand). I would like to ask the hon. member for South Norfolk (Hon. Mr. Tisdale) a question if he will allow me. I did not quite understand his remarks regarding politics entering the militia. Did I understand him to say that this was one cause why the force was not in as good a condition as it might be?

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. No. I said I thought it worth the minister's while to be careful, to make inquiries lest such a thing might exist; and that if it did exist it might explain some matters that we could not explain otherwise. Now, I would say just one word in reply to the minister. According to my idea the hon. gentleman was not quite correct in his reference to the Major General. The Major General is not an officer of the department; he is commander of the militia. The minister is responsible for his actions, and above him, but—

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I think he is an officer of the Canadian government.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. He is. But the hon. minister said he was an officer of the department—

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. Well, he is. He is certainly not controller of the department, not the 'boss' of the department—not now, at any rate.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. The hon. minister told us to-day of his arrangement about the stores department. I said I commended the hon. gentleman for his arrangement for the ordnance stores department. But if the position of the Major General in regard to it is to be circumscribed, friction will arise, and the arrangement will be of little good. I laid it down before and I do it now that the general is under the minister. The minister is under our system responsible. His position is political.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. That is right.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. And the minister cannot divest himself of that responsibility.

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. That is right.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. When we use the word 'political,' we use it in the sense in which the hon. member for Haldimand and Monck uses it. But this matter is different. I cannot be satisfied without an assurance from the hon. minister that the Major General would ever have put in his general report what he did about the special report unless he were perfectly willing that the hon. minister should show it anywhere, because, judging from what I have heard of him from all quarters, he is the last man who would do anything else. I believe the Major General put that in there not to decide whether it was to be used or not, but to let it be known that he did so. There was

one thing that I forgot to mention in my remarks, and that was the singular absence from his report of any mention of the scheme in regard to the reserve, &c., outlined by the hon. minister. That is the reason I read that little clause where he made the single remark about putting every regimental establishment on a war footing and stating that within each unit there would be the germ of a reserve. I knew that the Major General had written something else about that, and it must have been in the report originally, because I saw a Major General's report so barren of reference to the strength of the different establishments and no mention at all of a reserve except in this one little paragraph, notwithstanding that this was the most fruitful of all subjects upon which he could have written. Of course, it is not for him to c'tate to the hon. minister, nor will he attempt to do so. However, the hon. minister takes the responsibility, and if he sees fit, he has the might to do so, but in my opinion it is not a case where 'might will make right', but

I think it is a great mistake if the Major General is to be made an automaton. If he has anything to suggest to the minister, let us know what he says when it comes to the regulation of the militia. We want a man, and we have got him for a Major General, and it is a grave step for the minister to repress his special report to which he says he has 'given a great deal of thought and which contains a broad scheme for the improvement of the militia. If the proposals contained in it are carried out they will in my opinion conduce to the greater efficiency of the militia.'

THE MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. I think my hon. friend will agree with me that the proper means of communication with this House and with the country from the Major General is through the mouth of the minister, particularly when there is a question of policy involved.

Hon. Mr. TISDALE. Certainly, it must be through the minister's mouth.